



Morning Alert - Friday, September 2, 2016

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HEADLINES

Morning news

NHK led with a report that about 1,100 people are stranded in Iwate Prefecture after Typhoon Lionrock hit the region. TBS also reported on the aftermath of the typhoon in Iwate. TV Asahi gave top play to a report that Tokyo Governor Koike has begun reviewing the budget for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics. Other top news included a report that Japanese wrestler Saori Yoshida, who failed to achieve a fourth straight Olympic title, plans to continue wrestling.

Top stories in national dailies included a Nikkei report on Japan's plan to propose comprehensive energy cooperation with Russia and a Sankei story on a plan by Japan and China to reach an agreement on the establishment of a maritime and air communication mechanism by the end of the year.

INTERNATIONAL

Japan to propose comprehensive energy cooperation with Russia

Nikkei gave top play to a report claiming that the Japanese government will propose to Russia wide-ranging cooperation in the energy sector, under which Japan will study investment in oil and natural gas development in the Russian Far East and Eastern Siberia as well as technical cooperation in decommissioning nuclear power plants. The Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry is considering investing in Russian state-owned oil giant Rosneft. The paper speculated that the proposal is aimed at making progress in the negotiations on the Northern Territories by strengthening economic ties with Moscow.

Russia welcomes Japan's appointment of minister on economic cooperation

Yomiuri wrote that Russia's Minister for the Development of the Far East Galushka welcomed on Sept. 1 Prime Minister Abe's creation of a new cabinet ministerial post charged with promoting economic cooperation with Russia by saying that the move apparently shows the Japanese government's intention to accelerate and expand Japan's economic relations with Russia.

Poll: 57% of Russians aware of Northern Territories talks

Yomiuri and Nikkei wrote that MOFA released on Sept. 1 the results of its public opinion survey of the Russian people's sentiments toward Japan conducted from March through April. Some 57%, down 19 percentage points from the previous survey in 2010, said that they were aware of the Northern Territories negotiations between Japan and Russia. Among those who said they were aware of the territorial negotiations, 53%, the same as the previous survey, said that the islands belong to Russia and should remain Russian, while 42%, up 10 points, said the two nations should reach an agreement on the issue. Only 1% said the islands should belong to Japan.

Japan, China plan to agree on establishment of communication mechanism this year

Sankei gave top play to a report saying that it learned from several sources connected to Japan-China relations that the Japanese and Chinese governments are making final arrangements to reach a formal agreement by the end of this year on establishing a maritime and air communication mechanism aimed at preventing unforeseen incidents in the East China Sea. The paper conjectured that the two nations will confirm the plan at the expected Abe-Xi meeting on the sidelines of the G20 summit in Hangzhou.

Japan disburses 1 billion yen to comfort women foundation

Thursday evening's Asahi and Yomiuri wrote that South Korea's Foreign Ministry confirmed on Sept. 1 that the Reconciliation and Healing Foundation for former comfort women has received 1 billion yen from the Japanese government. Forty-six comfort women who are still alive will receive about 10 million yen each, while the families of comfort woman who died before the Japan-ROK agreement last year will receive around two million yen each, for projects to restore the honor and heal the psychological wounds of the women. Japan expects that the money will be used for medical and nursing care for the women and for funeral costs and scholarships for their relatives.

Japan to support economic reform in Saudi Arabia

Nikkei front-paged a report on Prime Minister Abe's meeting with Saudi Arabian Deputy Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman at the Kantei on Sept. 1, during which Abe expressed Japan's readiness to extend support to the Middle Eastern nation in its efforts to transform from an oil-dependent state. During the 40-minute meeting, the two agreed to form a bilateral cabinet-level cooperative group that will hold its first meeting in Riyadh in October. Japan plans to present a detailed proposal centered on making it easier for Japanese companies to operate in Saudi Arabia. Mainichi and Yomiuri ran similar inside-page reports.

SECURITY

U.S., Japan agree to partially move Osprey drills out of Okinawa

All papers wrote that the governments of the U.S. and Japan agreed at their Joint Committee meeting on Sept. 1 to transfer some of the drills involving Futenma-based MV-22 Ospreys to Guam and the Japanese mainland. Japan agreed to shoulder the related costs. The papers speculated that the move is intended to gain Okinawa's understanding for Futenma relocation by demonstrating the GOJ's efforts to reduce the base-hosting burden on the prefecture. The U.S. will conduct drills by 16 of the 24 Futenma-based Ospreys on Guam and other locations for three weeks starting on Sept. 12, and Japan will shoulder some 700 million yen for fuel and other expenses. Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga stated at a news conference that the new arrangement will contribute to further reducing the base-hosting burden on the prefecture. Okinawa Governor Onaga released a comment saying that he basically welcomes the agreement and will continue to watch closely to see if it leads to a tangible reduction in the base burden.

Okinawa minister denies link between budget cut and Futenma relocation

Nikkei wrote that Okinawa Affairs Minister Tsuruho told the paper on Sept. 1 the Cabinet Office's decision to cut the budget requested to revitalize Okinawa Prefecture in fiscal 2017 to 320.9 billion yen, 14 billion yen less than the initial amount in fiscal 2016, is not related to Futenma relocation by saying that the decision was made through comprehensive discussions.

Ospreys participate in disaster preparedness drills in Sasebo

Thursday evening's Tokyo Shimbun wrote that U.S. Marine Ospreys participated in disaster preparedness drills conducted by the city government of Sasebo, Nagasaki Prefecture, on Sept. 1, which is designated as Disaster Prevention Day in Japan. The aircraft transported a disaster medical assistance team to a remote island from a GSDF base in the city. Negotiations are underway between the Defense Ministry and Saga Prefecture on the deployment of Ospreys at Saga Airport. The Ospreys' participation in the drills was probably intended to underscore the safety of the aircraft.

SCIENCE

Dolphin hunting season opens in Taiji

Thursday evening's Nikkei wrote that the season for drive dolphin hunting opened in Taiji, Wakayama, on Sept. 1, with 12 fishing boats leaving the Taiji port after 5 a.m.

